



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/590,951	11/08/2006	Franz jun. Neuhofer	NEUHOFFER, JR.-16 PCT	3739
25889 7590 06/06/2008 COLLARD & ROE, P.C. 1077 NORTHERN BOULEVARD ROSLYN, NY 11576				
EXAMINER TRIGGS, ANDREW J				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
3635				
MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
06/06/2008		PAPER		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/590,951

Applicant(s)

NEUHOFFER, FRANZ JUN.

Examiner

Andrew J. Triggs

Art Unit

3635

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 August 2006.
2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 is/are pending in the application.
4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 is/are rejected.
7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 28 August 2006 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☒ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/5508)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 8/28/2006
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Specification

1. Applicant is reminded of the proper language and format for an abstract of the disclosure.

The abstract should be in narrative form and generally limited to a single paragraph on a separate sheet within the range of 50 to 150 words. It is important that the abstract not exceed 150 words in length since the space provided for the abstract on the computer tape used by the printer is limited. The form and legal phraseology often used in patent claims, such as "means" and "said," should be avoided. The abstract should describe the disclosure sufficiently to assist readers in deciding whether there is a need for consulting the full patent text for details.

The language should be clear and concise and should not repeat information given in the title. It should avoid using phrases which can be implied, such as, "The disclosure concerns," "The disclosure defined by this invention," "The disclosure describes," etc.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1 and 7-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stanchfield, US Patent # 6,860,074.

Regarding claim 1, Stanchfield teaches a covering device for joints in panels such as

floor panels (Abstract). Stanchfield teaches that the cover can be made of plastic based products, such as PVC (Column 4, Lines 50-51). These types of materials are commonly formed by extruding them through a machine to create the desired profile. Stanchfield teaches, in Figure 2, a clamping web (16) that protrudes

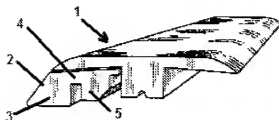
downward from the covering flange (12) and extends in a longitudinal direction along the cover. The clamping web (16) is used to secure the cover by inserting it into the clamp (26). Stanchfield also teaches a compensating strip (40) on the underside of the covering flange that engages the covering flange with a tongue and groove mechanism (18). Stanchfield teaches, in Figure 2, that the tongue (18) is on the covering device and the groove (42) is on the compensating strip (40) as seen in Figure 3. Stanchfield discloses the claimed inventions except for the tongue and groove mechanisms are reversed. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to make the cover with the groove and the compensating strip with the lug, since it has been held that a mere reversal of the essential working parts of a device involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Einstein*, 8 USPQ 167. Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.

Regarding claim 7, Stanchfield teaches the device as described in claim 1. Furthermore, Stanchfield teaches, in Figure 19, that the various components of the covering device (300) are formed together and then broken to separate them (Column 8, Lines 33-40). The pieces can be separated by scoring and snapping, cutting, sawing or simply bending. This lets the product be manufactured as whole units as well as letting the installer buy all the pieces needed to complete the job. Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.

Regarding claim 8, Stanchfield teaches all the components can be formed at the same time and include "break away" sections or "connecting lands" where the pieces are separated (Column 8, Lines 33-35). Since the covering device is made from a plastic material and plastic materials are commonly extruded, it would be obvious that the cover and compensation strip would be formed, as well as coated at the same time. Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.

4. Claims 2-3 and 5-6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stanchfield, US Patent # 6,860,074 in view of Neuhofer, US Design Patent # D542,941.

Regarding claim 2, Stanchfield teaches a covering device with a compensating strip that has a tongue and groove connecting mechanism but does not teach the compensating strip has two legs. However, Neuhofer teaches in the annotated figure below, a covering device (1) with a compensating strip (2) that has a basic form of an angle and two legs (3 and 4). Furthermore, it can be seen that the compensating strip (2) makes an extension of the cover (1) extending downward. One of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention would have been motivated to have a compensating strip with two legs because the legs form a continuation of the covering device that creates a smooth even flowing cover over a gap between panels. Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.



Regarding claim 3, Stanchfield teaches a compensating strip but does not teach a supporting leg connected to the leg that has the tongue and groove mechanism. However, Neuhofer teaches in the annotated figure above, that the compensating strip (2) has a supporting leg (5) projecting from leg (4). One of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention would have been motivated to further include a supporting leg because a groove between the supporting leg and other leg can be used to secure the compensating strip securely. Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.

Regarding claim 5, Stanchfield teaches a cover with a compensating strip that fit together in a tongue and groove fashion but only with one tongue and one groove. However, Stanchfield also shows further embodiments of the compensating strip that has different shape tongues. Figure 18 shows a compensating strip (210) that has a tongue (218) that inserts into groove (219) that is located on the clamping web (16). This embodiment is similar to the one shown in Figure 8 of the applicant to represent the peripheral projection. Stanchfield only teaches on tongue and groove mechanism however it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to

use multiple securing mechanisms because they would further lock and locate the compensating strip to the covering device. Also, Stanchfield discloses the claimed inventions except for the tongue and groove mechanisms are reversed. It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention was made to make the cover with the groove and the compensating strip with the lug, since it has been held that a mere reversal of the essential working parts of a device involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Einstein*, 8 USPQ 167. Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.

Regarding claim 6, Stanchfield teaches, in Figure 6, that where the compensating strip (40) connects to the covering flange (12) there is an adhesive strip (31). Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.

5. Claim 4 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Stanchfield, US Patent # 6,860,074 in view of Neuhofer, US Design Patent # D542,941 in further view of Kemper, US Patent # 6,345,480.

Regarding claim 4, Stanchfield in view of Neuhofer teach a cover device that has a supporting leg on the compensating strip. It can be seen in Figure 1 of Neuhofer that there is a channel between the legs that is capable of accepting a fixture from the profile cover but Stanchfield only teaches one securing means (26) on the fixture. However, Kemper teaches the use of two securing means (6 and 12) on the fixture (3). One of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention would

have been motivated to include two or more securing means on the floor mounting plate fixture in order to secure not only the covering device but also the compensating strip to the floor. Therefore, the invention as a whole would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention.

Conclusion

6. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. See Notice of References Cited.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Andrew J. Triggs whose telephone number is 571-270-3657. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday through Thursday 7:00am - 5:30pm EST.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Richard E. Chilcot can be reached on 571-272-6777. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Richard E. Chilcot/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art
Unit 3635

/Andrew J Triggs/
Examiner, Art Unit 3635